

REMARKS

Claims 1-16, 18, 19, 22, 25, 27, 29-35, 38-46 will be in the application for further prosecution after entry of the proposed amendments. Claims 1-16, 29-35, and 38-44 have been allowed. Claims 18, 19, 22, 27, and 34 have been amended and claims 17, 21, 23, and 26 have been cancelled. New claims 45 and 46 have been added. Claim 21 was objected to. New Claim 45 combines Claim 21 with Claim 17 and should be allowable. New Claim 46 is related to original Claim 20 and made dependent from Claim 5.

Claims 17, 19, 22, 23, and 25-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Savolainen et al (Savolainen). The reference discloses a light-duty chain design in which the female end is integral, that is, it does not have links that are formed of two separate members. The Savolainen links have bosses at the male end that can be separated so that they can engage the integral female end, which should provide a less accurate fit of the male and female parts than is possible in the Applicant's chain. In the Applicant's design, each link is made in two pieces so that it can be assembled without bending, although the polymer members could be bent if desired. The female ends of the Applicant's chain links have a boss which receives the boss of the male end of the male end of the first link and also receives a track-contact member, which aligns both the male and female ends of opposing link members.

Claim 19 has been amended to depend from new Claim 45 and to further define the benefit of track-contact member in aligning the engagement of the female ends and the male bosses. This provides increased integrity of the assembled links against bending stresses and thus increasing resistance to distortion when the claim is under tension.

Claim 22 has been amended to add the track-contact member, which is located axially between the female ends by their respective bosses and improves the alignment of the assembled links.

Claim 25 remains as previously amended. The Examiner states that "Figure 5 of Savolainen shows I-shaped sections", which appears from the Fig. 5 to be incorrect, only a "T" shaped section is seen, as confirmed in the view of Fig. 4. The advantages of the I-shaped section are discussed at page 13, lines 17-24. The T-shaped section of Savolainen could not provide the same advantages.

Claim 27 has been amended to clarify that the bosses of this claim are used to connect the chain link to an associated unit. These bosses are referred to as carriage mounting bosses 124 and 126 at page 5, line 21 to page 6, line 2. No such feature is found in the Savolainen design.

Claim 18 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable (i.e. obvious) over Savolainen in view of Christmas. Claim 18 has been made dependent on new Claim 45 and the sleeve bearing defined as non-metallic and self-lubricating (see page 10, line 17 to page 11, line 1). This bushing maintains the male and female link ends in concentric alignment and bears radial and thrust loads between them. The Christmas chain design is clearly much different and presumably it is a chain of metal, not polymers. The inner and outer link plates are joined by a pin, which will carry the loads imposed on the chain, a feature that is contrary to the Applicant's design in which the pin does not carry loads, but instead are imposed on the joined male and female bosses. Finally, the Christmas chain includes both inner and outer rollers, which are not found in the present chain design. The mere presence of a sleeve bearing does not suggest that the Christmas chain design could be combined with that of Savolainen.

The Examiner is asked to enter the proposed amendments, reconsider his rejections and to allow the claims as amended. If he believes that further amendment may be necessary, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's attorney at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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